



STATE OF GEORGIA  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

**Sonny Perdue**  
**GOVERNOR**

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## **Seven Georgia Counties Reach Certified Work Ready Community Status**

*Creating skilled workforce, improving public high school graduation rates*

ATLANTA – Governor Sonny Perdue today announced seven new Certified Work Ready Communities, a designation showing the county has the skilled workforce businesses demand and the educational infrastructure to drive economic growth and prosperity.

“By becoming Work Ready these communities are positioning themselves for future growth,” said Governor Perdue. “The communities are building the skilled workforce that employers rely on to succeed and grow.”

Barrow, Bleckley, Catoosa, McDuffie, Pike and Ware counties were named Certified Work Ready Communities of Excellence. Brooks County has been named a Certified Work Ready Community. These counties represent the sixth group to complete their Work Ready Certificate goals and have successfully met at least the required minimum increase in their county’s public high school graduation rate.

The new Certified Work Ready Communities achieved the following:

- Barrow County: 866 Work Ready Certificates earned (33 percent above goal); increased high school graduation rate from 69 percent to 75.5 percent

- Bleckley County: 533 Work Ready Certificates earned (118 percent above goal); increased high school graduation rate from 72.1 percent to 82.6 percent
- Brooks County: 424 Work Ready Certificates earned (95 percent above goal); increased high school graduation rate from 50.5 percent to 63.3 percent
- Catoosa County: 860 Work Ready Certificates earned (25 percent above goal); increased high school graduation rate from 70.9 percent to 76.2 percent
- McDuffie County: 869 Work Ready Certificates earned (164 percent above goal); increased high school graduation rate from 72.7 percent to 77.6 percent
- Pike County: 507 Work Ready Certificates earned (121 percent above goal); increased high school graduation rate from 76.4 percent to 80.2 percent
- Ware County: 1,147 Work Ready Certificates earned (102 percent above goal); increased high school graduation rate from 62.6 percent to 76.6 percent

To earn the Certified Work Ready Community designation, counties must demonstrate a commitment to improving public high school graduation rates through a measurable increase, and show a specified percentage of the available and current workforce have obtained Work Ready Certificates.

Each community created a team of economic development, government and education partners to meet the certification criteria. Counties are given three years to reach the goals necessary to earn the designation. One additional county – Berrien County – has met its Work Ready Certificate goal and continues to work to improve its high school graduation rate.

To date, 19 counties have earned the Certified Work Ready Community designation and 120 others are working toward their individual goals.

Once counties attain their Certified Work Ready Community goals, they are able to maintain their status by ensuring a small percent of their available workforce continue to earn Work Ready Certificates, engage local businesses to recognize and use Work Ready, and continue to increase their public high school graduation rate until they reach a threshold of 75 percent. Once they reach 75 percent, they must maintain that graduation rate to maintain their certification status.

To continue their work, each county will receive a \$10,000 grant. Their Work Ready Community teams will also receive a two-year membership to their local chamber of commerce and a budget for additional Work Ready outreach materials. Counties that are fully certified receive road signs and a seal denoting the year they achieved certification.

Georgia's Work Ready initiative is based on a skills assessment and certification for job seekers and a job profiling system for businesses. By identifying both the needs of business and the available skills of Georgia's workforce, the state can more effectively generate the right talent for the right jobs. The Certified Work Ready Community initiative builds on the assessments and job profiling system to create opportunities for greater economic development.

For more information on the Work Ready initiative please visit the Web site at [www.gaworkready.org](http://www.gaworkready.org) .